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Scholars Playing James Bond

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Our cloak-and-dagger gentry are bright as a hoarded Kennedy dollar and sharp as an electric carving knife—between the covers of a "spy mystery." In the field, however, they often are naive enough to be welcomed by their opposite numbers and stuffed with misinformation.

According to Dr. Ralph L. Beals this is particularly true of intelligence agents posing as anthropologists. They are easily spotted because of their ignorance. Himself an anthropologist, Dr. Beals is deeply disturbed by the effect of this continuing huggermugger on scholarship. Under a variation of Gresham's law, the pseudo-experts are eroding the effectiveness of the genuine. American scholars abroad are being frustrated by the suspicion that their activities are covers for espionage. We are developing another credibility deficit.

Universities are to blame to the extent that they accept contracts with the CIA and similar agencies. Dr. Beals has compiled a report on specific incidents, including, of course, Operation Camelot which ended in such a painful, public fiasco. He believes that it has become essential for scholars to fully disclose "not only their support and sponsorship but also the purposes of their research." But will such disclosures still be accepted at face value?

The Government certainly should check ill-advised and irresponsible activities. It should avoid the use of scholars as spies, and end the questioning of legitimate researchers on their return to the United States, except under the most compelling circumstances. Scholars have an obligation to resist the lure

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of grants which undermine professional integrity. The advance of knowledge depends on integrity.

If this is shadowed by even a few questionable undertakings, the long-run cost may be far greater than any immediate value of a hush-hush operation. Americans might be effectively excluded from the international company of scholars and scientists. Instead of sacrificing credibility and risking isolation, James Bond's work ought to be left to James Bond.